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ABSTRACT

The concept of "objectivity" suggests that facts are selected and constructed according to formal rules by professional journalists. A comparison of American and Soviet concepts of news leads to the observation that both share similar claims to objectivity. The similarity defies whether objectivity assumes the form of facts detached from values in the American case, or sociopolitical information in accordance with "objective" historical laws in the Soviet counterpart. While the American concept of news presents itself in such a way that its ideological function is implicit, the Soviet concept of news is defined in such a way that its ideological function is explicit. In spite of the apparent contrast, the claims to objectivity in both cases serve to legitimize the trend toward the concentration of access by media industries in the United States and by the State in the Soviet Union. (Author/HTH)

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# OBJECTIVITY AS IDEOLOGY: A COMPARISON OF THE AMERICAN AND SOVIET CONCEPTS OF NEWS

by

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ABSTRACT

"Objectivity as Ideology: A Comparison of the American and Soviet Concepts of News"

Yung-Ho Im

The concept of "objectivity" suggests that facts are selected and constructed according to formal rules by professional journalists. In this paper, a comparison of the American and Soviet concepts of news leads to the observation that both share similar claims to objectivity. The similarity defies whether objectivity assumes the form of facts detached from values in the American case, or socio-political information in accordance with "objective" historical laws in the Soviet counterpart. In spite of the apparent contrast, the claims to objectivity in both cases serve to legitimize the trend toward the concentration of access by media industries in the United States and by the State in the Soviet Union.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper compares concepts of news in the United States and the Soviet Union, and aims to demonstrate how claims to objectivity in these concepts of news are used to justify a trend toward a concentration of access by media industries in the United States and by the State in the Soviet Union.

A concept of news, as a way of making sense of reality, is based on a theory of media, and more generally, a theory of society. A concept itself is conditioned by a social structure, and has a function of justifying the practices of the existing media system. For this idea, I draw upon Stanislaw Ossowski's comparative study of the concept of class, or stratification. A society's concept of class or stratification, he argues, reflects its class structure, and in turn, this concept has a rhetorical function to justify the class structure.[1] Based on his idea, I will argue that a concept of news reflects a media structure, and more specifically, that a claim to objectivity serves to vindicate a trend toward the obviation of diverse views of reality in the United States as well as in the Soviet Union.

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[1] Stanislaw Ossowski (1963), Class Structure in the Social Consciousness, trans. by Sheila Patterson, (New York: Free Press of Glencoe).

A comparison of different social systems involves the question of value-judgment. As a precursor in the comparison of different communication systems, Four Theories of the Press comes to mind.[2] However, the authors presumably presuppose the Western communication system as the criterion for comparison. They make an implicit value-commitment, i.e., the belief in libertarian values. But this view obscures the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union are moving closer towards each other in the exclusion of participation of diverse views.

The notion of separation between the State and the media has roots in the Western pluralist view of society. Based on this separation, the media are considered to function as a public sphere, mediating between diverse social groups. With the increasing monopolization of access to the media, and the debilitation of participatory democracy, the ideal of the "free marketplace of ideas" becomes irretrievably unfeasible. The "free marketplace of ideas" exists only to the extent that every social group is free to buy, but not necessarily to sell. But the pluralist assumption still persists. This view is recurrent especially in comparisons with socialist systems. To the pluralist view, the unity of media and political power foreshadows a death knell to democracy. Despite the claim to objectivity, however, journalistic practices in "pluralist" societies have been shifting farther away from providing diverse

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[2] Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (1956), Four Theories of the Press, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

pictures of reality.

Based upon the pluralist assumption, a comparison of the American media system with the Soviet media system might end up reaffirming libertarian values and camouflaging the distance between the ideal and the reality. Harold Innis wrote:

> We must all be aware of the extraordinary, perhaps insuperable, difficulty of assessing the quality of a culture of which we are a part or of assessing the quality of a culture of which we are not a part. In using other cultures as mirrors in which we may see our own culture we are affected by the astigma of our own eyesight and the defects of the mirror, with the result that we are apt to see nothing in other cultures but the virtues of our own.[3]

To compare different cultures or social systems, therefore, it is appropriate to identify each culture in terms of its own logic.

This type of argument might lead to the conclusion that each society has a particular cultural or ideological system to maintain and reproduce itself. This might also lead to extreme relativism, suggesting that every system is unique and hence incomparable. Therefore, to single out and compare certain trends, my discussion involves a value-commitment. When I argue that the American and Soviet concepts of news are "ideological" in derogatory sense, it is evident that I introduce a normative claim, which presupposes an ideal form of news. As an ideal form of news, I have in mind a type of news which would be a forum for the participation and the expression of individual interests.

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[3] Harold Innis (1951), The Bias of Communication, (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press), p. 132.

In this paper, I will compare how the American and Soviet literature of journalism define the news, and argue that the claim to objectivity serves to justify the incessant trend toward the monopolization of access by the media industry and the State. I will examine the concepts in two ways. First, I will locate the concepts in terms of their organizational contexts. In both countries, the production of news depends on large institutions, and the concepts of news are formed under the different imperatives of such institutions. Then, I will examine how both concepts, i.e., the different claims to objectivity, have turned into the ideology of the dominant media practices.

## AMERICAN CONCEPT OF NEWS: THE MYTH OF OBJECTIVITY

As a cultural form to make sense of reality, the American concept of news is defined in terms of objectivity. I want to examine how objectivity is defined, and in what context it is formed in the United States.

According to an American journalism text, news can be defined as "a report of an event, containing timely (or at least hitherto unknown) information which has been accurately gathered and written by trained reporters for the purpose of serving the reader, listener, or viewers."[4] This phrase implies that even though news may not be a truthful reflection of reality, objectivity should still be an ideal for journalists in

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[4] Phillip H. Ault and Edwin Emery (1959), Reporting the News, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.), p. 16 (emphasis added).

approaching reality.

Michael Schudson put it: The belief in objectivity is "the belief that one can and should separate facts from values," i.e. "a faith in 'facts,' a distrust of 'values' and a commitment to their segregation."[5] Of course, viewed historically, the notion of objectivity has not necessarily assumed a homogeneous form. Before the 1920s, according to Schudson, doubt about the subjectivity of perception was not so prevalent among journalists.[6] But in the '20s and '30s, there began to emerge the observation that facts themselves could not be trusted. As a response to this observation, a simple faith in facts began to be replaced with "an allegiance to rules and procedures": the notion of "objectivity," he wrote. Objectivity in this sense means that "a person's statements about the world can be trusted if they are submitted to <u>established rules</u> deemed legitimate by a <u>professional</u> community."[7] Even though, then, a simple faith in "facts" is disillusioned, "facts" still can remain "objective" insofar as the facts meet the consensus among a professional community.

Thus, objectivity and professionalism, as James Carey asserted, have long been intertwined, and even perhaps mutually defined.[8] If, metaphorically speaking, the news convention of

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[5] Michael Schudson (1978), <u>Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers</u>, (New York: Basic Books), pp. 5-6.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid, p. 7 (emphasis added).

[8] James W. Carey (1969), "The Communications Revolution and the

objectivity is the rule of the game, then journalists are the players of the game. To the extent that it is not written what is to be news, journalists manage the game on their own. However, to the extent that journalists should remain within the rule of the game, the notion of objectivity reflects, in a sense, the routinized character of professionalism in journalism. Journalism is neither autonomous nor specialized to the extent that it can be called a profession. Journalists work within organizational and institutional constraints. They are all, in Dan Schiller's words, "subject to institutional charges outside, as well as within, the news room."[9]

In such a situation, professionalism is developed as a response to the imperatives within news organizations. Some organizational studies, i.e. research into the "production process" of the news, have identified the pattern of journalistic work, that is the routinization of news production both within and across news organizations.[10] Phillip Elliott pointed out that professionalism in journalism means skill and competence in the

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Professional Communicator," In Paul Halmos (ed.), The Sociological Review Monograph, no. 13: Sociology of Mass Media Communicators, p. 33.

[9] Dan Schiller (1981), Objectivity and the News, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 1, fn.

[10] For example, Warren Breed (1955), "Social Control in the Newsroom," Social forces, 33:4, pp. 326-35; Timothy Crouse (1973), The Boys on the Bus, (New York: Ballantine); Edward Jay Epstein (1973), News from Nowhere: Television and the News, (New York: Vintage); Phillip Elliott (1979), "Media Organizations and Occupations: An Overview," In James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott (ed.), Mass Communication and Society, (Beverly Hills: Sage); Herbert J. Gans (1979), Deciding What's News, (New York: Pantheon).

performance of routine work tasks necessary to meet organizations' goals: factual accuracy, speed at meeting deadlines, style in presentation and a shared sense of news values.[11] Gaye Tuchman claimed that professionalism in journalism also means the techniques devised to observe impartiality and objectivity.[12] In Tuchman's context, "objectivity" is defined in terms of a routinized form rather than in terms of content of the message. Objectivity becomes, in her often-cited words, a "strategic ritual." In her view, objectivity is a set of conventions, or "routine procedures ... which protect the professional [journalists] from his critics."[13]

Research in news room practices has provided the insights that all news is selective and repetitive, and that objectivity represents routine organizational and institutional constraints on daily decisions and judgments. As Schiller pointed out, however, such studies rarely seek to "explain the patterning of professional journalistic behavior as a dependent, rather than constitutive, series of practices."[14] Such studies leave rather unexplored "institutional changes outside, as well as within, the news room."

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[11] Elliott, op. cit., p. 149, 159.

[12] Gaye Tuchman (1972), "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," American Journal of Sociology, 77:4, pp. 660-679.

[13] ibid., p. 678.

[14] Schiller, op. cit., p. 1, fn.

A rather common explanation of objectivity resorts to the commercial imperatives of the news media. Assuming that news objectivity did arise in a predominantly commercial context, Schiller tried to prove historically that the concept of objectivity began with the rise of the penny press.[15]

Among more recent explanations is the reliance on the government and other official news sources as co-participants with the media in the creation of standard news themes.[16] For instance, Jock Young asserted, in the production of news, a most fundamental conflict occurs between two desires: namely, from the standpoint of media, the desire to maximize ratings (the audience function) and, from the perspective of the status quo, the desire to maintain political control (the control function).[17] To sell the news, the media should meet the needs of the audience for news. But they also try to keep the commodity within the political and moral limits which are acceptable in the social system as a whole. Insofar as news is a commodity, the control function must constantly accommodate itself to the audience function. But this accommodation stays within limits. According to Young, it is through professionals' relative autonomy, i.e.

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[15] ibid., p. 32.

[16] For example, Gitlin (1980), The Whole World is Watching, (Berkeley: University of California Press); Mark Fishman (1980), Manufacturing the News, (Austin: University of Texas Press).

[17] Jock Young (1981), "Beyond the Consensual Paradigm: A Critique of Left Functionalism in Media Theory," In Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (ed.), The Manufacture of News, (Beverly Hills: Sage), pp. 411-2.

the professional values of journalism as bourgeois ideals of the free press, that the control function and the audience function can be compatible.[18] W. Lance Bennett and others called this type of explanation a symbiotic theory, in that the organizational imperatives of the news industry and the political imperatives of government and social institutions converge to create a news logic.[19] The convention of objectivity, intertwined with professionalism, comes from this context.

Against the above-mentioned context, can the convention of news be considered neutral or "objective?" There has been much research along this line.[20] What is common to this body of literature is that objectivity, as a format of production of routine news, harbors an implicit logic, which is amenable to an ideological function. Graham Knight and Tony Dean wrote: "news accounts, as a major form of constructing and transmitting social knowledge, are fundamentally ideological."[21] Similarly, Steve

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[18] ibid., p.415.

[19] W. Lance Bennett et al (1985), "Repairing the News: A Case Study of the News Paradigm," Journal of Communication, 35:2, p. 52.

[20] Steve Chibnall (1977), Law-and-Order News: An Analysis of Crime Reporting in the British Press, (London: Tavistock); Glasgow University Media Group (1976), Bad News, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul); James Halloran and Phillip Elliott (1970), Demonstrations and Communication: A Case Study, (Harmondsworth: Penguin); Paul E. Willis (1971), "What is News: A Case Study," Working Papers in Cultural Studies, no. 1, pp. 9-36; Stuart Hall (1977), "The Determinations of News Photography," Working Papers in Cultural Studies, no. 3, pp. 53-87.

[21] Graham Knight and Tony Dean (1982), "Myth and the Structure of News," Journal of Communication, 32:2, p. 145.

Chibnall also asserts that a framework of concepts and values, impelled by professional imperatives, acts as underlying guides to the construction of news. Their news imperatives are: immediacy, dramatization, personalization, simplification, titillation, conventionalism, structured access, and novelty. Through these imperatives, he wrote, consensus is supported and any challenge to the consensus is marginalized, trivialized or constructed as deviant.[22] Thus, Hall maintains, though news values may appear as a set of neutral, routine rules, formal news values become "an ideological structure" and the "formalization and operationalization of an ideology of news."[23]

These findings reveal an inconsistency with the meaning of the word "objectivity" in the ordinary language. In addition to having the function of indicating referents, particular words have acquired in ordinary use a considerably emotional charges, whether positive or negative. As Charles Stevenson discusses, some words have "emotive meaning" as well as "descriptive meaning."[24] Drawing on the definition of a dictionary, the word "objectivity" refers to: "verifiable by scientific methods," or "expressing or involving the use of facts without distortion".[25] Following Stevenson's criterion, the word "objectivity" seems to

[22] Marian Meyers (1985), "News Conventions as Purveyors of Ideology," Unpublished Paper, School of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Iowa, pp. 6-7.

[23] Hall, op. cit., p. 77 (emphasis original).

[24] Ossowski, pp. 166-7.

[25] Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield: G & C Merriam Co., 1973), p. 791.

have the least emotive meaning. If one accepts the definition as the meaning of the word in ordinary discourse, the meaning contradicts the point of this discussion: The American concept of news is not "objective." The label "objectivity" is, notwithstanding, employed to designate the value-laden referent. The label is still useful in political discourse, because the word has, in Ossowski's expression, a "propaganda value."[26]

## SOVIET CONCEPT OF NEWS: THE RHETORIC OF OBJECTIVE LAW

While the American concept of news presents itself in such a way that its ideological function is implicit, the Soviet concept of news is defined in such a way that its ideological function is explicit. This is because in the Soviet Union, the definition of news constitutes an integral part of the official ideology.

According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, which reflects or at least approximates the official position of Soviet authorities, journalism in the Soviet Union is:

> a public activity involving the gathering, handling, and dissemination of news... [and is] also one of the forms through which mass propaganda and agitation are conducted.[27]

But these two functions are not held to be equally important. To employ news in a purely informative function is officially considered as a "bourgeois" view.[28] According to V. I. Lenin,

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[26] ibid., p. 166.

[27] E. P. Prokhorov (1975), "Journalism," Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd ed., vol. 9, (New York: Macmillan), p. 297.

[28] Anton Buzek (1964), How the Communist Press Works, (New York:

news and information are indispensable for conducting propaganda and agitation. If news does not serve this purpose, or if it informs only for the sake of informing, news is useless and can be even damaging. In his conception, all news, every piece of information, must have an "inner tendency"; that is, it must serve a certain goal.[29]

Lenin's claims are treated as the guiding principles of journalism in the Soviet Union. Thus, the Great Soviet Encyclopedia prescribes the principles for selecting information as follows:

> The information... ought to have social significance for the audience, help form its opinions on public affairs and its world outlook, and give it some idea of the phenomena, processes, and tendencies of all phases of modern society. The information also should reveal the laws that determine the functioning and development of economic, social, political, ideological, and intellectual life in society.[30]

In short, news should provide "socio-political information" rather than mere facts. In the Soviet Union, Alex Inkeles points out, events are not news, and rather social processes are treated as being news worthy.[31] It may help understand why Great Soviet Encyclopedia does not contain an entry on "news," but instead one on "socio-political information".

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Frederick A. Praeger), p. 170.

[29] Ibid., p. 169.

[30] Prokhorov (1975), pp. 297-8.

[31] Alex Inkeles (1962), Public Opinion in Soviet Russia, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), p. 139.

According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, this information should stand "on the basis of Marxist-Leninist methodology and in accordance with the principle of partiinost (party spirit)".[32] Therefore, journalists should be subject to the party. In other words, the communist party predetermines, at least potentially, the principle of selecting socio-political information.

This is the rationale for collating the party and the media in the Soviet Union. The merger of the media with political power, from the Western view based on the pluralist model of society, appears to be a symptom of an authoritarian theory of media. Much research, for example Mark Hopkins and James Markham, has highlighted the connection between the media and the party.[33] This research mostly has called for the seperation of the media from the government, which is a libertarian value of the Western media system. But the autonomy of the media from the State is not an essential element in the Soviet theory of society.[34] The first requirement, then, in a comparison with the

[32] Anonymous (1976), "Sociopolitical Information," Great Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 10, p. 275.

Marxist-Leninist methodology is based on the interpretation of history in terms of modes of production, i.e. the relations of production vis-a-vis the forces of production. In other words, history is the process of class struggle between antagonistic classes. In addition to this general scheme, strategic and tactical theories in the process of class struggle were supplemented by Lenin, i.e. the notion of the party as the vanguard of the proletariat. In journalism, therefore, the principle of party spirit occupies a position coterminous with Marxist-Leninist methodology.

[33] Mark W. Hopkins (1970), Mass Media in the Soviet Union, (New York: Pegasus); James W. Markham (1967), Voices of the Red Giants, (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press).

American media system is to locate the Soviet media system in the context of the whole Soviet social system or in the Soviet theory of society. A possible strategy is to criticize the theory of media, following the inner logic of the Soviet theory of society.

One can find the rationale for the unity of the media and the party in the Soviet philosophical literature. In the Soviet Union, even the same word or term sometimes denotes a different meaning from that of the Western world. One of the most important terms is "freedom." In the United States, following a dictionary, freedom means "the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action."[35] It is close to free-will vis-a-vis necessity. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union, the word has about the opposite meaning. From the Soviet point of view, using Yevgeny Prokhorov's definition:

> From the Marxist point of view, freedom means the possibility of action within the framework of a realized necessity. Necessity, within the framework of history, means the sum of definite patterns that are independent of man's consciousness and make their way through a mass of happenstance.[36]

Here freedom is described as the compliance with the necessity of the outer world. This definition leads one to another question: How can we perceive the realized necessity?

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[34] It can be found in the provocative view of the communist theory of the press. see Armand Mattelart (1980), Mass Media, Ideologies and the Revolutionary Movement, (Sussex: The Harvester Press).

[35] Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 458.

[36] Yevgeny Prokhorov (1976), "The Marxist Press Concept," In Heinz-Dietrich Fischer and John Calhoun Merrill (ed.), International and Intercultural Communication, (New York: Hastings House), p. 51.

In the Soviet philosophy, socio-historical reality is regarded as "the objective world that realizes its tendencies, laws, and potentialities ... that is, as being, in its self-transformation and self-development."[37] Accordingly, one can perceive reality through discovering laws or tendencies, which are inherent in reality. Law is to reality what potentiality is to actuality. Law becomes reality through human action. Since, however, law has "an objective character, expressing real relations between things, as well as their reflection in consciousness,"[38] reality is not susceptible to human free-will. Further drawing on the Great Soviet Encyclopedia,:

> Social and historical laws, since they operate in the same way as the conscious actions of human activity itself: they are created and carried out only by man. But the action of social laws, like that of the law of nature, is objective: at the basis of the historical process is the development of the mode of production... Man's power over the surrounding world is measured by the extent and depth of his knowledge of its laws.[39]

What is of the utmost importance is the knowledge of objective laws. Freedom is feasible, following this logic, only to the extent that knowledge is attained, not vice versa. The Soviet theory of media is based on this interconnection of freedom-reality-law and the supreme role of necessity.

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[37] A. P. Ogurtsov (1975), "Reality," Great Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 8, p. 614.

[38] A. P. Spirkin (1975), "Law," Great Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 9, p. 318.

[39] ibid., pp. 318-319 (emphasis added).

In the Soviet Constitution, freedom of speech and press are literally guaranteed: Journalism enjoys legal rights "in the struggle for progressive social development in accordance with objective historical laws."[40] This implies that there exist objective laws, and because laws are objective, discussion over them is superfluous. The party or journalist takes into account audience expectations only in order to "provide the masses with a reliable orientation to reality and develop their consciousness,"[41] in accordance with objective laws.

As a corollary, in the Soviet theory of media, it is assumed that every person is not equally competent. Prokhorov wrote:

> Within the bounds of society, certain people operate who are endowed with a heightened consciousness and will-power and set themselves definite goals.[42]

The party members, as the vanguard or political incarnation of the proletariat, belong to this group. The role of the Soviet journalists are similarly defined. According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia:

> communist journalists are characterized by ideological profundity, devotion to principle, initiative and militancy, intransigence toward ideological opponents, and the ability to apply Marxist Methodology in analyzing public events, to quickly and efficiently orient themselves in a developing situation, to lay bare the causes of actions and events, to analyze documents, and as a result, in the words of Engels, "to grasp things quickly from the proper angle."[43]

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[40] Prokhorov (1975), p. 299.

[41] ibid.

[42] Prokhorov (1976), p. 51.

[43] ibid (emphasis added).

That is, the communist journalists are, it is claimed, equipped with professionally and ideologically prominent qualifications. The ordinary people are considered immature in terms of their competence to comply with objective laws. Therefore, they are the object of education in the form of propaganda and agitation. The result is the predominance of the "orthodox" line, without allowing any alternative interpretation of the objective laws.

Then, one can raise the most crucial issue: How can the historical laws be claimed as objective? The principle of contradiction, a basic principle in historical materialism, provides a clue. How do the Soviet authorities interpret the principle? The Great Soviet Encyclopedia stipulated:

> The dialectical principle of contradiction reflects the dual relationship within a whole: the unity and the struggle of the opposites. The unity of opposites, which expresses the stability of objects, is relative and transitory. The struggle of opposites is absolute and finds expression in the endlessness of the process of development. The determining factor here is that contradiction is not always the relationship between opposing tendencies within an object or between opposing objects. It is also a relationship of the object to itself--that is, the permanent self-negation and self-contradictoriness of the object.[**]

If contradictions are, supposedly, the inherent nature of objects, what is the nature of the contradictions in Soviet society? A. G. Spirkin claimed that the contradictions in Soviet society are not fundamental (or antagonistic) contradictions. Nonfundamental (or nonantagonistic) contradictions, he continued, "which are specifically associated with all social relations in

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[**] A. G. Spirkin (1978), "Contradiction," Great Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 21, p. 35 (emphasis added).

nonexploitative society, take the form of intervention between classes whose basic interest and aims coincide."[45] Nonfundamental contradictions, further, are qualitatively different from contradictions, "which consist in the interaction of irreconciliably hostile social classes, groups, or of forces," and "emerge on the basis of private ownership of the means of production and the fundamentally hostile interest of opposing classes."[46] From a "scientific" Marxist perspective, he criticized the "left revisionists" and "Maoists" who assert that antagonistic contradictions are universal, even in socialist societies.[47]

Even if one accepts Spirkin's view, there lies an enormous gulf between the ideal and reality. Actually there remains only a nominal or terminological difference between the ideal of a classless society and the reality of a new class society without the ownership of the means of production. This suggests the resurrection of class relations, however, through excluding alternative explanations, in the name of objective historical laws.

The exclusion of alternative interpretations has its historical roots in Lenin's principle of the party as the vanguard of the proletariat. Since Lenin's principles were the product of the specific historical context, one can criticize his

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[45] ibid.

[46] ibid., p. 35.

[47] ibid., p. 36.

principles by reflecting on the historical context. Together with the historical situation, his principles also shifted.

Thus, as Albert Resis asserted, the dissident in the Soviet Union view can find ample support for freedom of the press even in Lenin's writings.[48] According to Lenin, genuine freedom of the press means "that all opinions of all citizens may be freely published."[49] And suppression of anti-Bolshevik press had been justified as a series of "temporary," emergency measures unavoidable in revolution and civil war.[50] For the pressing need of the period called for the Soviets to take power. Thereafter, Lenin claimed, bourgeois freedom of the press would be superseded by "genuine freedom of the press--proletarian, socialist freedom--by making the press available to all parties and public organizations in proportion to their numerical strength."[51] Lenin's writings, therefore, focused on strategic and tactical means to organize the party and centralize power. But Lenin's strategy and tactics concerning the necessity of utilizing news as a means to achieve his goals subsequently established themselves as a "Leninist" principle.

Thus, in the Soviet Union, the function of news ceases to be a process in which different views and interests collaborate and are incorporated. Rather, the function of news is as a means to

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[48] Albert Resis (1977), "Lenin on Freedom of the Press," The Russian Review, 36:3, p. 296.

[49] Ibid., p. 282.

[50] Ibid., p. 295.

[51] Ibid., p. 283.

apply to the reality "the objective laws" circumscribed by the party. Such a principle of news as an instrument instead of a goal subsequently turns into the apologetics for the monopoly of access by the party.

## ONE OR TWO VIEWS?: A COMPARISON

In the United States and the Soviet Union, news became the product of large institutions such as media industries and the State. The participation in or access to the media becomes more and more difficult. As a consequence, the pluralist view is reduced to an ideal. The concept of news is inextricably conditioned by this development. Since the United States and the Soviet Union have different social and political systems, their concepts of news are articulated in different forms. In spite of that, however, both political systems reveal some similarities in claiming objectivity, and shifting gradually toward a one-sided representation of reality.

In the United States, the concept of objectivity involves the claim that facts can be "objective." Facts are selected and constructed according to formal rules by professional journalists.[52] Thus a halo effect is conferred upon the notion of objectivity. News appears as an impersonal artifact produced by specialists, who are detached from social groups. The American social order is still based on a pluralist view of society. The

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[52] Schudson, op. cit., p. 7.

objectivity of news, as a product of professional activity which is separated from political power, plays a crucial role in legitimizing the present media system. But objectivity, as formal rules, does not warrant the separation of facts from values. The routinization of news production both within and across news organizations produces an implicit news logic. As a result, as Hall argues, while news appears as a set of neutral, routine practices, it can be construed as "the formalization and operationalization of an ideology of news."[53] To recapitulate, despite the avowed detachment of facts from values, the concept of objectivity, through an implicit operation of ideology, legitimizes the given social order and thereby the media system.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union rejects the notion of an "objectivity" of facts. Instead, a Soviet theory of the media claims that the present is merely a stage on the way to the future, in accordance with objective historical laws. Since the news depicting and conveying the present is only a means of transition to the future, any news account retarding or hindering this transition is therefore deemed illegitimate. This position is tenable if there exist objective historical laws. The crux of the problem is, then, whether the historical laws can be "objective." By excluding the fundamental nature of contradiction from the Soviet society, however, the Soviet Marxist theory reduced objective historical laws to a fixed "Marxist-Leninist methodology." Thus, the objective historical

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[53] Hall, op. cit., p. 77.

laws justify the exclusion of alternative views, resulting in the monopoly of access by the party cadres.

Given the different social, political, and intellectual context, the concepts of news in the United States and the Soviet Union vary significantly. Despite the apparent contrast, however, both share specific aspects. For instance, both systems are moving closer towards the monopolization of access. This development provides a context in which a neutral or disinterested position of journalists becomes less desirable and therefore more unattainable. Both in the United States and the Soviet Union, ironically, the claim to objectivity prevails against such a context, where the avowed ideal may remain unfeasible. This contradiction, inevitably, leads one to a cautious conclusion: The claim to objectivity may serve as an ideology to justify the situation of increasing limited access.

What kind of theoretical implications may be drawn from this discussion? One implication originates from the simple observation that a concept of news is a socio-cultural form. In this type of comparison, therefore, one inevitably encounters the troubles involved in dealing with different cultures. For example, in dealing with the Soviet culture, one might locate the object of comparison within the Soviet cultural context. Rilla Dean Mills' cultural analysis is suggestive here: He tried to get out of the Western prejudice in his study of the Soviet journalists.[54] Yet the result is perplexing: The Soviet

[54] Rilla Dean Mills (1981), "The Soviet Journalist: A Cultural

journalists are not so strait-jacketed as one might suppose. They have professional values like the American journalists and, in a certain area, they have a broader range of activity than their American counterparts.

Another barrier to surpass, therefore, is the problem of relativism, e.g., that every culture is unique, making it impossible to compare with other cultures. The problem is how to exclude extreme relativism, while locating the object of comparison in the logic of each culture or social system. In order not to fall into relativism, a certain value-commitment is inevitable. Therefore, such a comparison involves a normative claim, which should be justified. In this paper, the normative claim is the ideal of participation of diverse views. In a comparative study, one inevitably makes a value-commitment as a normative claim. Therefore as a theoretical premise, value-commitments must be made explicit and justified. As Jurgen Habermas asserted, a normative claim is tenable, insofar as it can be raised and redeemed through discourse.

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